SEVEN HEAVENLY THINGS

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Heavenly Things

Jesus answered and said unto him, "Verily verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

This is one of the most important chapters in the whole Bible, because the experience refered to in this chapter will help us to enjoy fully God's love and God's grace. Now you will notice in this portion how the Lord Jesus speaks of some heavenly things. In verse 12 He says, "If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" Mark the expression "Heavenly things." In this chapter our Lord speaks about seven heavenly things.

1. In verse 3 He speaks of the Everlasting Kingdom: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

2. In verse 16 He speaks of Everlasting Love: "God so loved the world."

3. He speaks of the Everlasting Sacrifice : "that He gave His only begotten Son" (verse 16).

4. He speaks of Everlasting Life : "Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (verse 16).

5. In verse 14 he speaks of Everlasting Victory: "Even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Here our Lord Jesus Christ speaks of the cross on which He has conquered death for eternity on our behalf.

6. He speaks of eternal Judgement: "Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" and "He that believeth not is condemned already" (verse18).

7. Then he speaks of Everlasting Condemnation: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (verse 19).

All the truths the Lord Jesus Christ has mentioned here are of eternity.

In order to understand the full message of this chapter first of all we have to understand the full message of this chapter. First of all we have to understand that the Kingdom of God will not pass away. That is why in the beginning itself, our Lord speaks of that Kingdom. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (verse 3). The very first message which our Lord preached in His ministry, from the time He began it after His baptism, was about that kingdom. From that time Jesus began to

preach and to say, "Repent: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17).

Similarly, John the Baptist also gave the message in the beginning of his ministry saying "Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). Other prophets of God like Isaiah also have spoken of the same kingdom. In the New Testament the Apostle Paul emphasised the same message again and again, "....walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory" (1 Thes. 2:12). Similarly, John the Apostle in the Book of Revelation draws our attention in the first chapter itself to the same kingdom. "And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his father....." (Revelation 1:6). "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:10). So before we can understand fully the message of John chapter three, let us keep in mind that there is a kingdom which will never pass away: the heavenly kingdom, and our Lord wants us to be with Him in that kingdom, because His love is so great, His grace is all sufficient, His purpose is so high.

The Lord wants us to possess that Kingdom, not merely look at it or even visit it for a little while, but He wants us to own it as kings. "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). He does not invite us just to come and look at and then go away; neither does He invite us as guests for a

short time. He wants to give us the kingdom. Whatever God gives, He gives for eternity. He is the God of eternity. His love is also for eternity. He assures us, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3). God's love will never change. We may change, but God's love will never change.

The purpose of God, when He created the first man Adam, was to give him dominion and to make him a king. He was a unique king. There was no sin; therefore there was no sickness, no sorrow, no thorn, no thistle. Only later did all these come because of the curse of sin. At that time the whole earth was surpassingly beautiful and fertile. As a gift God made Adam king over all the earth, and also gave him dominion over all the living creatures animals, birds and fishes alike. Adam could command any bird, fish or animal and they had to obey him. God's word says so. In fact God gave man power, dominion and authority over the whole creation. Adam could say, "I am a king over he whole earth." God made him so" Only when sin came did Adam lose his privileges. But God's love did not change and God's purpose did not change. God Says, "For am the Lord, I change not....." (Mal 3:6). We change. God cannot change. His love cannot change. His purpose will never change. The purpose of God which He had in view when He created the first man, Adam, can never change.

The Lord Jesus Christ came into this world to restore unto man the privilege Adam lost. By His obedience

the Lord Jesus Christ recovered what Adam lost by disobedience. Thus through His obedience we become heavenly kings. By ourselves we can never become heavenly kings. Only the obedience, love, grace and power of the Lord Jesus Christ can make us heavenly kings. That is why the Lord is saying to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

"The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him. Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." (John3:2). Nicodemus regarded the Lord Jesus Christ at that time as a heavenly teacher come from God. Now when you go to a teacher, you go to learn something; to ask some questions for which you need an answer. We in school or college days, go to our teachers with questions for which we do not know the answer. Evidently Nicodemus had come that evening to the Lord Jesus Christ with a big question.

Our Lord knows our thoughts. He knows our names and knows all about us. In another Scripture passage we read, "And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee, And he saith, master, say on" (Luke 7:40). That happened in the home of a man called Simon. Simon had invited the Lord Jesus Christ home for food. At that time a woman who was a notorious sinner also came uninvited and began to weep at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. When Simon saw her at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, he began to think in his heart, "How can

He be a prophet? We all know this woman ! Why has He allowed her to touch His feet like this?" Similar thoughts were growing in the mind of Simon. And the Lord Jesus Christ knew these thoughts, Simon never spoke to Jesus openly. He was only thinking. But the verse says. "Jesus answering said." He knew what Simon was thinking.

He is our Creator. He knows our thoughts. He knows our names. He knows our past and future. During the early days of Jesus' ministry a man was brought to Him. When Jesus saw him, He said, "Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone" (John 1:42). This happened soon after the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ. A man called Andrew first met Jesus. Andrew went in search of his brother Simon and told him, "We Have found Messiah: come and see him. Andrew then brought Simon to the Lord Jesus Christ and Straight away our Lord called him by his name. Even before Andrew could tell Him his name, our Lord said, "You are Simon, I know you, I know your father and I know your past and future." Thou art Simon, the son of Jona and thou shall be called Cephas."He knows our names let them be malayalee names, Tamil names, Telugu names, Hindi names or any other names. It is all so wonderful. He knows our thoughts and all about us. Similarly we read in the same chapter how a man called Philip went in search of a man called Nathanael. After much searching he found Nathanael and brought him to the Lord Jesus Christ for

the first time. Straight away our Lord said of him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." Then Nathaneal was surprised and questioned him, "How do you know me? Who told you about me? Our Lord smiled and replied, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee" (John 1:48). His eyes can see everything. He knows all about us. The Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar found this to be true. "For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly" (John 4 : 18). He knows all about us.

My point is that our Lord knew who Nicodemus was and why he came to Him. He came with a question and before he put that question our Lord knew it. It is very clear that Nicodemus never came to our Lord for any other purpose. He was a healthy man and so he did not come for healing. He was a ruler of the Jews who had no worldly ambitions and thererfore he did not come for any favour. He came with a question, and his question was, "How can any man be in the Heavenly Kingdom?" He came with this question because he was familiar with and believed the many prophecies in God's Word about God's coming heavenly Kingdom. "Thy kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations" (Paslms 145:13). "And in the days of these Kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed : and the kingdom shall not be left to other people,

but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan.2 : 44). "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, wich shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan 7 : 14). These are a few of the many prophecies in God's Word. They were written long before the Lord Jesus Christ came into this world, and described His coming everlasting kingdom. The man called Daniel also prophesied about the rise and fall of several great world kingdoms such as that of Persia, Greece and Rome. He prophesied about 550 BC long long before the kings were born or their kingdoms established. In many cases he prophesied by name before the kings and their kingdoms even came into existence. He prophesied that all these kingdoms of the world would one day pass away, no matter how great or strong they were. By the time the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world some of these had actually risen and fallen. But he had prophesied about a kingdom which shall not pass away; and that is why, I believe, Nicodemus came that evening to the Lord Jesus Christ to learn from Him the answer to this question. He was a God-fearing man. He loved God. He wanted to Know how man can be in God's kingdom. The Lord Jesus Christ gave him this simple answer, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). He repeats the same message five times in the chapter : verses 3, 5, 6, 7, 8. "Be born again, Be born again, Be born again." The emphasis is on being born again. It is only by receiving a new life, life that is divine and eternal, can we be in the

Heavenly Kingdom. In God's Kingdom everything is for eternity. It does not exist only for a short time. It is an everlasting Kingdom. It will therefore never pass away. In the everlasting Kingdom, there is everlasting glory, everlasting purity, everlasting love, everlasting inheritance, everlasting power, and everlasting wisdom. Those who want to be in such a kingdom must have everlasting life. In that kingdom everything is for eternity and that is why in the same chapter our Lord goes on to speak of everlasting life (John 3:16).

Now there are four kinds of life. First, there is plant life. Take a tiny seed. Put it in the ground, water it and it grows. A tiny seed can become a big tree because there is life in it. The life in the seed has power to bring forth branches, then leaves, later on flowers and fruits. Then there is animal life. It includes birds, fishes, insects and all creeping things and animals. There are some birds that can fly very long distances. They do not stop on the way for food. They have no compass. They have no pilot. Yet they can find their way because of the life that is in them. In the same way the honey bees also can travel many miles in search of honey and come back home without getting lost because of the life that is in them. Thirdly, we have Human life, with its conscience and the ability to know good and evil. Human beings can also make wonderful machines and build bridges and sky scrapers and do many many other things. Lastly there is the life called. "Everlasting Life" and the Lord Jesus

Christ came into this world to give us this everlasting life. He himself said so. "I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). But we must receive it by simple faith. "Verily, verilyl, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life" (John 6:47). "He that Believeth on the son hath everlasting life" (John 3:36). He repeats the same message in the next chapter "Verily verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life" (John 5:24). We find from these passages how the same thing is being repeated agin and again. So there is no doubt that there is life called Everlasting Life. But the only person Who has spoken of it is the Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody else spoke of it. In Him was life (John 1:4). He is the life and resurrection. He came into the world to give us that life. Those who desire to be in the Heavenly Kingdom must have that everlasting life: because in that kingdom nothing can exist without it. It is the gift of God. God offers it to us freely (John 3:16). Any of us can receive it and enjoy it. Of all the gifts offered by God, it is the most precious and holy. In that gift and through that gift we enjoy the whole heaven. in the Scriptures it is written, "Eye hath not seen, not ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor 2:9). But all these good things are only for those who receive by faith the gift of eternal life. Having received such a gift, Paul the apostle exclaims, "Blessed by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual

blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). It is so very clear. He has right now blessed us with all the blessings of heaven: all the blessings mind you, and not only a few. "All the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus... All are yours; And ye are Christ's; and christ is God's" (I Cor 3:22 and 23).

Now imagine you want to buy something and you go into a very big shop in London. In these days they have super markets. In such a place you can buy anything and everything you want. But you only want to buy a small suitcase and so you go in there. You can walk around the whole super market and you show the salesman only small suitcase costing only $I. You go to the manager and ask him, what is the price? Suppose the manager answers "All these things are yours. There is no price. Every thing is free. You bring all the trucks you can and carry away everything you desire. You can carry all things away." you will be surprised, will you not? You came to buy just a small suitcase, but the manager is telling you the whole super market is yours, and that you could take it all away. Will it not be wonderful? You find the similar thing here. We go to God and Say: "God have mercy upon me, and forgive my sins. Do not punish me. Have mercy on me."But the Lord says, "My son, not only do I forgive you but also give you my whole Heaven." That is what God's Word Says. They are not my words. God has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Is it not a

wonderful salvation? It is a great salvation our Lord wants us to be filled with His fulness. To this end we wants us to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that we might be filled with all the fulness of God (Eph. 3:19). What a love! That is the prayer of Paul the apostle. We must understand that God's love is so great. It passeth our knowledge, it is beyond our understanding. It is so great! It is unique ! Ah! the wonder of it all: God wants us to be filled with His fulness. It is only when His work of salvation is completed that we shall know how we are filled with God's fulness. That is why God want us to be with Him for eternity as kings that we might be filled with His fulness. For that purpose He now offers us the gift of eternal life-the most precious and holy gift. But we cannot receive it in our impure hearts.

God's Word says our heart must be cleansed first. "Follow... Holiness, Without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14); and "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). But nobody can say he or she has a pure heart. "for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (Matt 15:19). "How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?" (Job 15:16). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). These few verses from God's Word show us the true picture of our heart's condition: very wicked, full of deceit, and utterly defiled. There's no exception, "for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Now the question is, how can any person with such a heart receive the gift of eternal life? It is a holy gift; it is a precious gift. It is for eternity and it can only be received into a pure heart, and that is why our Lord died. He took upon himself our sin and our punishment. What we could not do, He has done. He did no sin, yet He gave Himself to receive our punishment. He has all power: power over death, power over sickness and power over the demons. He loved everbody, God's word says, "As many as touched were made perfectly whole" (Matt. 14:36). "As many as touched him were made whole" (Mark 6:56). He loved every one and blessed every one. He has all power. He said "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). There was no need for Him to die. He did no sin. He did not die for the angels; they have no need. He did not die for the birds; they had no need. Yet He gave Himself. Why? He died for you and for me. He took my place, and your place to bear the judgement of our sins, and to pay our penalty.

Some years ago a wealthy man used to come to see me. Every time he came in tears. He had two sons. The younger son was living in sin: drinking, gambling and doing many other shameful things. His father was a well known man. The son went to many shops and borrowed money in his father's name. The father would tell me, "Brother! pray for my son. My son is living in sin." We both knelt down and he prayed with tears. "Oh God have mercy upon my son;

speak to him, rescue him and forgive him", and so on. Then he will go and pay all the bill-every single bill of his son. This went on month after month for two or three years. Only a father can do it. An uncle will not do it. A father-in-law will not do it. A mother-in-law will not do it. Nobody can do it. They may pay your bills once, twice or even three times. But the fourth time they will surely say, "Do not come again." But a father can pay the bills. The Lord Jesus Christ is our Creator. He loves us with an everlasting love. There fore He bore our judgement, paid the penalty, and took upon Himself the punishment of our sins. He did all lovingly and willingly and washed us from our sins that we may be able to receive into our hearts the gift of eternal life, so that we may live for ever in eternity as His heavenly Kings and as His co-workers.

Now please see how it can happen. First of all, let us see what happened to us when we sinned. The Word of God Says, "God created man in His own image" (Gen.1:27). It means that He made man pure, beautiful and without human limitations. When sin came it resulted in death and man underwent a three-fold change.

"Death came into the spirit; the soul became darkened; and the body became defiled. To know this threefold downward fall of man we must understand what man is." And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus

Christ" (I Thes. 523). Man is made of three components. We have, i) Spirit, ii) soul and iii) body. That is how God created man. " And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen.2:7). We find the same three things here. The Body (Body of Dust). The spirit (God's breath)and the soul (man became a living soul). Now let us see what the body is, what the soul is and what the spirit is.

First-Body: The body is composed of three things: muscles, blood and bones. These are the main parts of the body.

Secondly-soul: similarly, there are three parts in the Soul. We have intellect, emotion and will power. With intellect we understand and can be wise: that is God given wisdom; We have emotion with which we love; love our parents; love our children; love our friends or wife or neighbours. We have will power so that we can decide for ourselves. We can say 'Yes', or we can say 'No'. We can refuse to see, refuse to speak. No one can force us for the Lord has given us free will. So intellect, emotion and will power make our souls.

Thirdly-Spirit : i) We have conscience-that is the inner voice which tells us to do this thing or not to do that. Now, suppose I want to tell a lie, my conscience immediately tells me "Do not tell this lie!" But I say, "You keep quiet, you keep quiet." So there is a war between me and my conscience

and that means I must first kill my conscience to tell the lie. Similarly we must kill our conscience to commit any sin: to deceive, to be impure or to hate others. God gave every man a conscience, but by sin we have a dead conscience. Sin brings death into us. ii) Then we have the longing to know the unseen, we want to know who God is. These are common to all men. iii) We have intuition which is above human reasoning . Suddenly a compelling and unexplainable thought comes. "Let me now go and see my father, mother, friend or my neighbour. We do not know why the thought came. It just comes, "Let me do this and let me do that." These are the faculties of the spirit.

Now we have seen God made man in His own image. But through sin death came into the spirit. We have a dead spirit. As sinners we have a deadened conscience, and that is why we cannot feel God's presence. He is a living God. He is a loving God, but because of sin we cannot feel His presence: neither can we hear His voice. He is a living God, but we are spiritually dead. As long as we live in sin, we are spiritually cut off from Him.

Secondly, we have a darkened soul. We misuse and abuse our intellect, our emotions and will power. We become proud and haughty. Sometimes in words, but more often in our behaviour we seem to say, "I am somebody; you are nobody. I am everything, You are nothing." In short this is the condition of my soul.

Thirdly, our body is defiled by sin. We commit sin with our hands and lips and other members of our body and defile it. That is why we have lost the glory and beauty God has given us. So we can say that in the three compartments of our being, because of sin, we have undergone a threefold downward change. The spirit became dead, the soul became darkened and the body became defiled. But "God is a spirit : and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4: 24). So it is clear that if I want to know God I can only know Him in my spirit. I cannot see Him with my eyes. I cannot hear Him with my ears. I cannot feel Him with my hands. But there is one possibility of seeing Him, feeling Him, and hearing Him. It can be done in the spirit. God is spirit. Only in my spirit through my spirit and by my spirit I can know Him. Nobody can know Him by human wisdom. He is the eternal God and His wisdom is infinite. By ordinary and natural and finite wisdom we cannot know Him. But we can know Him if our spirit is quickened and purified. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can do this wonderful work of transformation. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:14).

Our conscience goes on recording everything we say and do. Suppose we have a tape recorder. It will record what we are saying. God has put a tape-recorder in all of us

and that tape-recorder is our conscience. What we speak, what we think, what we do, are all recorded there. It is a wonderful tape-recorder. It has many tapes to record. It goes on recording both day and night. What we think, what we say and what we do are all being recorded. Every sin we commit leaves a mark in our conscience. Even sinful thoughts and words leave their own impressions in the conscience. We try to forget but we cannot. This is the reason why many people remember their evil deeds on their death beds. They shed tears some give to charity, some fast and some pray : but none of these things can take away the guilt of their sins. Only the Lord Jesus Christ by His blood has power to purge our sins. He suffered to take upon Himself to pay our punishment. He shed His blood to cleanse us and wash us from our sins and He rose again to be our life and righteousness. In Him alone is our hope, "....that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. 1:5). He washed us. Only the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has power to wash our guilty stains and marks of sin.

Before God's Spirit can come into a filthy and defiled spirit, it must be cleansed, purged and washed. Then automatically God's Spirit comes into our spirit. This process is called "NEW BIRTH." Why is it called so? How do I know it happens? I know it because I undergo a three-fold upward change. As by sin I underwent a threefold downward change.. dead spirit, darkened soul and defiled body; so now by the NEW BIRTH I undergo a threefold upward change. By God's

spirit coming into my cleansed spirit, the once defiled body becomes the holy temple of the Holy Spirit. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). My body which was defiled for so long is now God's Temple. The wonder of it! I have the same hands, same feet and the same tongue, but now I refuse to defile them any more. Before the transformation took place my tongue, my lips and my eyes did what they pleased. I was constantly defiled. What I long to do now is to praise God, to worship Him, and magnify Him. With these same hands I want to serve my fellow men and with this same tongue I want to praise my God. My body is now God's Temple.

My darkened soul becomes an enlightened soul because God has given me divine wisdom. Before divine wisdom came, love for novels, stories and other filthy books mastered me. My eyes were wide open for such things and I had no interest in God's Word. But now with my soul enlightened I find a new love for God's Word, God's house, love even for my enemy. There is no longer any race or class difference, no more Malayalee, no more Tamilian, no more white or black-all are one!

My dead spirit becomes a quickened-spirit. How? Now I feel God's presence. I talk to God. He speaks to me and I enjoy His presence. God is Spirit. I can love Him. I can

follow Him and obey Him. God's Spirit coming into my spirit and making me a three-fold new person in New Birth. My defiled body becomes God's Temple, my darkened soul becomes an enlightened soul and my dead spirit becomes a quickened spirit. The "New Birth" also gives the hope of living for ever. Now I know for a certainty that I will live for ever; I shall live with my Lord for ever with an immortal, heavenly and eternal body. Not only so but also as an heavenly king and as His co-worker.

Now the question is: are you bom again, in the sense that you have undergone a three-fold upward change? Has your body become a temple of God? Has the light of God shined upon your face? Does your tongue praise God? Does God's love fill you? Do you feel God's presence? Do you hear His voice? Do you have the hope of living for ever with an immortal body? If not, right now come to His feet. He will forgive you. He is a loving Saviour. He loves all of us. He is our loving Creator. He has borne the penalty of all your sins. He is willing to forgive you. "If we confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). He is willing to pardon us and forgive us completely of all our sins. Please come

unto Him; He will not force anyone. "Now then we are ambassadors for Chirst, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20).

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